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### **Service Awards More Than \$1.2 Million for Fish and Wildlife Restoration in the Great Lakes Basin**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today more than \$1.2 million in federal funding has been awarded under the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act (Act) grant program to restore sustainable populations of fish and wildlife resources and their habitats in the Great Lakes Basin. The six projects funded will provide \$475,522 in non-federal partner match contributions.

“The diversity of these projects will allow for a broad range of benefits to fish and wildlife resources across the Great Lakes basin,” said Tom Melius, Regional Director of the Service’s eight-state Midwest Region.

The projects include improving stream connectivity in the Boardman River Watershed in Northern Michigan, restoring wetland habitat for the threatened copperbelly water snake, evaluating marsh bird habitat to assist in conservation design, and other conservation research projects that will benefit Great Lakes fish and wildlife.

The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act is the primary federal program dedicated to restoring important fish and wildlife and the habitat they depend on in the Great Lakes region. Funding for the Act was increased by \$1.5 million through President Obama’s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in 2011. The Act promotes cooperative conservation, and restoration and management of native fish and wildlife resources and their habitat in the Great Lakes Basin among states, tribes, other interested entities and the Service.

“The Act has been a valuable funding source to encourage cooperative conservation, rehabilitation and management of the fish and wildlife resources and their habitat in Michigan and the Great Lakes basin,” said Dr. Kelley Smith, acting Natural Resources Deputy for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. “This year’s projects will provide timely information about the distribution of viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus (VHSV) throughout the Great Lakes, inform conservation design of marsh habitats, and provide funding for dam removal on the Boardman River – all important projects to the citizens of Michigan.”

Since 1998, through the Restoration Act, more than \$16.1 million dollars in federal funding has been used to fund 118 restoration projects. When combined with required matching funds, this equates to \$24.2 million worth of benefits to Great Lakes fish, wildlife and the habitats they depend on. More than 70 organizations have contributed more than \$8.1 million in matching non-federal partner support.

“The 2011 funds provided by the Act are critical to the planning and removal of the Brown Bridge Dam on the Boardman River near Traverse City, Michigan,” said Amy Beyer, Executive Director of the Conservation Resources Alliance and project manager for the Boardman River Dams Implementation Team. “The Service has been a great federal partner in achieving the goals of the Boardman River restoration projects.”

Projects approved for funding include:

***Boardman Dam removal project – Brown Bridge and Sabin removal phase***

This project will ultimately result in removal of 3 dams, the re-connection of 160 miles of natural river channel, and restoration of 253 acres of wetland habitat on the Boardman River, a premier cold water stream and state-designated Natural River that provides vital recreational and economic benefits to the region located near Traverse City, MI.

***Use of sensitive serological assays for determining the distribution of viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus (VHSV) in the Great Lakes***

This research will work to determine VHSV distribution within the Great Lakes and which components of the ecosystem contribute to its spread by focusing on a VHSV hotspot. These actions will help develop a better understanding of VHSV ecology, which is a priority for the development of fish health control plans and therefore of paramount importance in the Great Lakes.

***Restoration of deepwater ciscoes in Lake Ontario***

This project facilitates the collection of gametes and development of genetic analysis tools to evaluate reintroduction procedures. Identifying sources of reintroduced ciscoes using genetic tags will be essential to evaluate the success of restoring ciscoes to Lake Ontario.

***Completing the protected land layer for the Great Lakes***

This project will focus on digitizing the non-digital conservation lands and assimilate existing data to complete a protected lands layer for the Great Lakes. Knowledge regarding the spatial extent and distribution of existing protected lands will assist conservation planning and land protection efforts.

***Evaluating marsh bird habitat use at multiple scales to inform conservation design***

This work focuses on investigating marsh bird habitat use at large and fine scales to facilitate conservation planning and implementation within the Great Lakes region. It will identify variables important in determining marsh bird use of wetlands and develop spatial models that predict marsh bird distributions to assist conservation efforts.

***Restoring wetland habitat for the federally-threatened northern distinct population segment (DPS) of the copperbelly water snake***

This project will restore 44 acres of agricultural fields to habitat that will benefit the federally threatened northern distinct population segment (DPS) of the copperbelly water snake (*Nerodia erythrogaster neglecta*) by creating a complex of shallow ephemeral wetlands amongst forested uplands following guidelines outlined in the copperbelly water snake Recovery Plan.

For more information on the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, including how to apply for funding, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/fisheries/glfwra-grants.html>.

Funding for these projects were in part provided by the President's 2011 Budget which provided \$300 million for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency –led, interagency Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. For more information on the Service's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funded projects, please visit [www.fws.gov/GLRI](http://www.fws.gov/GLRI).

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).